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# **SRIMAAN COACHING CENTRE-TRICHY**

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**TRB-SCERT /DIET/GTTI  
(LECTURER)**

# **ENGLISH**

## **UNIT 7: INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE**

### **TORU DUTT: (1856-77)**

- ❖ Toru Dutt (1856-77) is a pioneer of **Indo-Anglian poetry**.
- ❖ She is an Indian poet who wrote both in **English as well as French**.
- ❖ Born to the **RambaganDutt family**, she was the **youngest child**.
- ❖ Their family converted from Hinduism to **Christianity in 1862**.
- ❖ Toru did her higher education in England. She was proficient in Bengali, English, French and even Sanskrit.
- ❖ She wrote two novels, the unfinished "**Bianca or the Young Spanish Maiden**" written in English and "**Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers**" which was written in French.
- ❖ Her poetry collection "**A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields**" consisted of translations of French poetry into English and was published in 1876.
- ❖ At the time of her death, she left behind an incomplete volume of original poems in English titled "**Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan**".
- ❖ Some of her popular poems include Lotus, Sita, Buttoo and Lakshman.

### THE LOTUS - Toru Dutt

Love came to Flora asking for a flower  
That would of flowers be undisputed queen,  
The lily and the rose, long long had been  
Rivals for that high honour. Bards of power  
Had sung their claims. "The rose can never tower  
Like the pale lily with her Juno mien" –  
"But is the lily lovelier?" Thus between  
Flower fractions rang the strife in  
Psyche's bower. "Give me a flower delicious as the rose  
And stately as the lily in her pride"-  
"But of what colour?"-  
"Rose red," Love first chose,  
Then prayed, - "No, lily-white, - or both provide";  
And Flora gave the lotus, "rose red" dyed  
And "lily white," queenliest flower that blows

### ABOUT THE POET:

Toru Dutt, the **"inheritor of unfulfilled renown"**, is one of the most talented poetesses in Indo-Anglian literature. As an interpreter of Indian thought and scene, Toru Dutt is the precursor of Rabindranath Tagore, Sir Aurobindo and Sarojini Naidu (The Nightingale of India). Toru Dutt rises up as a great poet if natures through her poems like- **"THE LOTUS"**, **"BAUGMAREE"**, **"NEAR HASTINGS"** and **"OUR CASURINA TREE."**

Through such nature poems, she unveils her sharp power of observation and sensitiveness to colour. Though Toru Dutt does not possess the metrical excellence and felicity of diction compared to Sarojini Naidu, she enjoys a privileged place in the arena of flawless spontaneity and lucidity in expression.

### **THE LOTUS:**

"The Lotus" is a studded sonnet. It reveals Toru's keen sensitiveness to nature and colour. We come across many instances where we fight for "positions" which may be bubbly too. This poem can be viewed in a

perspective that one should notice and bear with both the positive qualities and negative qualities. But when the positive qualities are weighed and intertwined, we get an admirable quality. This poem can be considered as one with a moral. It educates us. Though superficially, we get to know that the poet has highlighted the birth of a flower named Lotus, there is a wide area for contemplation. Toru Dutt has personified the flowers and has given them the humanistic nature of quarrelling.

### **SUMMARY:**

Once Love went to Flora (the Goddess of Spring and Florescence) and asked for a flower which be a challenging queen among flowers. The lily and rose had been rivals for long particularly for this cause. Poets have sung about the “delicious rose” and the “**stately lily**”. One half of the flower population claimed that the rose can never “tower” as the lily. (The lily plant and lily flower usually stands upright). While the rest emerged claiming that the lily cannot be so “delicious” as the rose appears (the rose captures the attention of every individual through her colour. This hits the usage of delicious).

The harmony was lost again. Finally, Love decided and requested Flora to give a flower that was **DELICIOUS** as the rose and **STATELY** as the lily. Flora gave the birth to a **LOTUS** which was a mix of both red and white. The rose and lily on looking at this turned red in shame and pale in sorrow and humiliation. From then, the **LOTUS** is considered as the loveliest of all flowers.

### **RECAP:**

- Love went to Flora asking for a flower.
- It had to be the queenliest of all flowers.
- The quarrel began between the supporters of Rose and Lily.
- Love requested Flora to produce a flower which had both the qualities.
- The Lotus was born which still remains the loveliest and queenliest of all flowers.

### **“OUR CASUARINA TREE”**

#### **(Text of the Poem)**

LIKE a huge Python, winding round and round

The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars,

Up to its very summit near the stars,

A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound



No other tree could live. But gallantly  
 The giant wears the scarf, and flowers are hung  
 In crimson clusters all the boughs among,  
 Whereon all day are gathered bird and bee;  
 And oft at nights the garden overflows  
 With one sweet song that seems to have no close,  
 Sung darkling from our tree, while men repose.  
 When first my casement is wide open thrown  
 At dawn, my eyes delighted on it rest;  
 Sometimes, and most in winter, —on its crest  
 A gray baboon sits statue-like alone  
 Watching the sunrise; while on lower boughs  
 His puny offspring leap about and play;  
 And far and near kokilas hail the day;  
 And to their pastures wend our sleepy cows;  
 And in the shadow, on the broad tank cast  
 By that hoar tree, so beautiful and vast,  
 The water-lilies spring, like snow enmassed.  
 But not because of its magnificence  
 Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:  
 Beneath it we have played; though years may roll,  
 O sweet companions, loved with love intense,  
 For your sakes, shall the tree be ever dear.  
 Blent with your images, it shall arise  
 In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes!  
 What is that dirge-like murmur that I hear  
 Like the sea breaking on a shingle-beach?  
 It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech,

That haply to the unknown land may reach.  
 Unknown, yet well-known to the eye of faith!  
 Ah, I have heard that wail far, far away  
 In distant lands, by many a sheltered bay,  
 When slumbered in his cave the water-wraith  
 And the waves gently kissed the classic shore  
 Of France or Italy, beneath the moon,  
 When earth lay tranced in a dreamless swoon:  
 And every time the music rose, —before  
 Mine inner vision rose a form sublime, Thy form,  
 O Tree, as in my happy prime  
 I saw thee, in my own loved native clime.  
 Therefore, I fain would consecrate a lay  
 Unto thy honor, Tree, beloved of those  
 Who now in blessed sleep for aye repose, —  
 Dearer than life to me, alas, were they!  
 Mayst thou be numbered when my days are done  
 With deathless trees—like those in Borrowdale,  
 Under whose awful branches lingered pale “Fear, trembling  
 Hope, and Death, the skeleton,  
 And Time the shadow;” and though weak the verse  
 That would thy beauty fain, oh, fain rehearse,  
 May Love defend thee from Oblivion’s curse.

### **EXPLANATION**

- ★ “Our Casuarina Tree” by Toru Dutt was published in 1881.
- ★ The Casuarina tree here refers to an ever-green, huge tree found in the courtyard of the poetess house.
- ★ The poem contains five stanzas.
- ★ **The first stanza** is a description of the beauty and strength of the tree.

- ★ The Casuarina tree has a creeper growing round it like a python and the trunk of the tree is rough and stands tall.
- ★ The trunk is embraced, almost strangled, by the creeper, but the tree defies it.
- ★ The Casuarina tree is personified here.
- ★ The tree bears the creeper and wears it like a scarf of bright red crimson flowers.
- ★ The branches are laden with them. On this tree, birds and bees gather. Darkling means in the dark.
- ★ The tree here symbolizes vitality.
- ★ **In the second stanza**, the poetess describes her view from her window (referred to as “casement” in the poem). Toru, being a nature poet, watched the reassuring sights of nature.
- ★ A grey baboon sat on the summit of the tree, watching the sun rise. The small and weak offspring of the baboon leaps about and plays.
- ★ The Kokilas (a symbol often used by Sarojini Naidu in her poetry) welcomed the day.
- ★ The old tree cast a shadow in the pond thus lending a shelter for sleepy cows to lie around.
- ★ Toru blends the East and West in her description of white lillies which appeared like bunches of snow on the top of a lake.
- ★ **It is in the next stanza** that Toru moves from a description of the physical beauty and strength of the tree to its emotional value in her life.
- ★ The poetess childhood memories and her siblings are brought into the picture.
- ★ This tree is probably the only link she has left with her past and her happy childhood days.
- ★ This tree had been dear to Toru not only because of its beauty but also because of its association with memories of her formative years.
- ★ Beneath this Casuarina tree Toru had played with her siblings during her childhood.
- ★ The tree in Toru’s mind was hence not objective, but subjective (typical Romantic element). This memory of her childhood days made her weep fresh tears.
- ★ Toru then moves on to the realization that her siblings are no more and their death is described as a form of sleep. The tree also laments along with the poetess.
- ★ Now Toru feels that the tree will take her message to the unknown land of the dead and thus convey her sorrow to her siblings.
- ★ **In the fourth stanza**, Toru remembers the tree exactly as it was in her childhood days. But though the tree lives her playmates have passed away.



★ The tree now remains a constant reminder of her loss and the poetess describes her anguish. Even while the poetess is abroad, the tree would appear in her mind just as she had seen it in her native land and would help her connect strongly with memories of her siblings and motherland.

★ **In the fifth and final stanza**, the poetess says that the tree is dearer to her than her own life.

★ The Casuarina tree was also loved by her siblings, who are unfortunately now in a “blessed sleep” (death). She realizes that she would also leave the world one day to rejoin her siblings but hopes that the tree would remain immortal. The poetess hopes that her poem and her love for the tree would stop the tree from being forgotten.

## **ANALYSIS**

♣ **“Our Casuarina Tree”** is a poem that celebrates the majesty of the Casuarina Tree along with reviving memories of the poetess' childhood days spent under it with her brother and sister, namely, Abju and Aru.

♣ The poem is aptly titled using the word “Our” rather than “My” implying that it is not associated only with Toru but also with her beloved siblings. The tree connotes nostalgic feelings and memories of past golden days.

♣ The creeper described in the first stanza may be a reference to the killer disease Tuberculosis which killed her siblings.

♣ The trunk of the Casuarina Tree being embraced by the creeper growing around it may also be considered a typical example from the puranas of the embrace of Dridharashtra.

♣ The image of the tree surrounded by birds and bees highlights the vitality of the tree. Gradually Toru moves from a description of the physical charm of the tree to a philosophical reminder of family ties. The Abju-Aru-Toru bond which also comes up in another poem titled “Sita” by Toru Dutt she writes of “Three happy children...” is one of the main themes of this poem as well.

♣ The beauty of the tree thus is just an added bonus, the real value of the tree in Toru's life is that it is the only link that remains for her to connect with her dead siblings.

♣ The term ‘unknown’ in the third stanza stands for both the native home of the poet as well as the world of the dead. The casement mentioned here refers to a window.

♣ Probably borrowed from Keats **“Ode to a Nightingale”** where we find the line “Charm'd magic casements opening on the foam” and “Thou wert not born for death, immortal bird”. Such instances of imitation and Romanticism may be found throughout the poem. The words ‘sleepy cows’ and ‘hoar’ remind us of resemblances with Thomas Gray's **“Elegy written in a Country Churchyard”**.

♣ The dirge borrowed from Shelley's **“Ode to the West Wind”** and shingle - beach (borrowed from Arnold's “Dover Beach”) are examples of imitation of Romantic poetry which was typical of poets of Toru's time. Just as Arnold felt “the eternal note of sadness” (**“Dover Beach”**), here Toru also feels sad when she

hears crashing on the shingle beach. It must be noted that the very name Toru in Sanskrit means tree. The word 'unknown' repeated in the ending of the third stanza and the beginning of the fourth stanza shows an influence of Romantic poetry (especially Keats "Ode to a Nightingale"). Here we find echoes of both Shelley and Keats. The image of a sheltered bay comes in Shelley's "The Cloud", so does a bay come in Arnold's "Dover Beach".

♣ As Toru studied and travelled abroad widely her picture of the Indian landscape is often coloured with memories of familiar English lands cape as well hence the reference to the trees of Borrowdale here.

♣ The trees of Borrowdale could also be an allusion to the Yew trees that Wordsworth wrote about. Though the poem bears resemblances with Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale", the Casuarina tree does not make Toru long for "easeful death" as Keats does.

♣ She does not wish to fade far away or dissolve like Keats but rather the tree stands as a pure reminder of the joys she experienced with Abju and Aru under the tree in the past. This is where Toru differs from her influencers. There is hope that love can transcend the pain and fear of death and loss. There is a sort of wholeness felt in the entire compilation of the poem, both in form and content.

## **R.PARTHASARATHY : UNDER ANOTHER SKY** **A RIVER ONCE**

### **R. PARTHASARATHY**

♣ **Rajagopal Parthasarathy** was born in the year **1934** and educated partly in Mumbai and partly in the UK.

♣ He worked as an English Lecturer in Bombay for around **ten years**. In 1971, he began working as Regional Editor of the **Oxford University Press in Chennai**.

♣ His works include "Poetry from Leeds" (1968), "Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets" (1976) and "Rough Passage" (1977).

♣ In "Modern Indian Poetry", Brice Kings says that "Parthasarathy gives more emphasis to the loss of root, through this English language education and poetry which places a wall between himself and the traditions of Tamil culture.

♣ Thus, the poet feels that he has become a stranger to the traditions of Tamil culture and thus has lost his roots."

♣ His works depict this constant awareness of being an exile both abroad and in one's own country.

♣ In his works, one can detect a need to overcome this sense of alienation from his own native culture and to rediscover his roots.

♣ He attempts to forge or invent an English language that is naturalized to express the Indian sensibility.

- ♣ This predicament is that of an IndoAnglian poet who is stuck in between the dilemma of a bilingual and bicultural situation.
- ♣ Parthasarathy is perhaps the only contemporary Indo-Anglian poet to explore and dramatize the poetical predicament. In his poetry's confessional, personal and authentic tone, he may be compared to poets like **Kamala Das** and **A.K.Ramanujan**.
- ♣ In his seminal essay titled **“Whoring After English Gods”**, Parthasarathy points out two problems of the Indian poet in English – the quality of experience and the choice of medium.
- ♣ To sum up, Parthasarathy's poetry is an intense search for identity, a search for roots in his native cultural environment and language.

### **“RIVER, ONCE”**

#### **(Text of the Poem)**

With paper-boats boys tickle my ribs  
And buffaloes have turned me To a pond.  
There's eaglewood in my hair and stale flowers.  
Every evening as bells roll in the forehead of temples  
I see a man on the steps clean his arse.  
Kingfishers and egrets whom  
I fled have flown my paps.  
Also, emperors and poets who slept in my arms.  
I am become a sewer now, no one has any use for  
Vaikai river, once of this sweet city.

### **EXPLANATION AND ANALYSIS**

- ❖ This poem highlights the exploitation of nature by human beings.
- ❖ The river in Parthasarathy's **“River, Once”** refers to **Vaigai River in the city of Madurai**.
- ❖ The river is personified as a mother in this poem.
- ❖ The old glory of the river is now lost as it has turned into a mere sewer due to human exploitation or misuse of the river.
- ❖ The poem begins by describing the present, pitiable condition of the river Vaikai.







- ❖ It is now frequented by children who come to float paper boats in it and by buffaloes who wallow in it, degrading the river into feeling like a pond.
- ❖ There's wood barks and stale flowers all over the river.
- ❖ It's as if the mother's (rivers) hair is decorated with eaglewood and dead flowers.
- ❖ And men come to defecate or bath in the river even while the temple bell tolls.
- ❖ The river's divinity is lost forever now.
- ❖ The word '**ribs**' used here is a metaphor for the banks of the river.
- ❖ The river itself is conscious of its ugliness and dirt (which is concrete evidence of man's abuse).
- ❖ The once glorious river is now reduced to merely a storehouse of junk, a place for unhygienic and unholy activities.
- ❖ The poet then describes the past glory enjoyed by the river.
- ❖ How it was once a source of inspiration for poets and a place of refuge for Emperors and Kings.
- ❖ As a mother, she proudly fed birds like the Kingfisher and Egrets (egrets are white herons).
- ❖ It must be noted that 'egrets' in Chinese symbolism are considered as a symbol of purity, patience and long life. Herons were also thought to have the ability to communicate with Gods.
- ❖ And Kingfishers are generally considered as a promise of prosperity.
- ❖ Hence both the kingfisher and egret refer to the once prosperous, pure and divine state enjoyed by the river Vaikai.
- ❖ Now, they have all flown away from her breasts (paps) as she is unable to feed them as she has turned or degraded into a mere sewer. She is no more a river and this takes us to the significance of the title of the poem, "**River, Once**".



















- ❖ It was a river once indeed but not a river anymore and has instead become a sewer due to man's exploitation and indifference towards nature.
- ❖ The poem ends by the river's self-realization that no one has any use for the river Vaikai now.
- ❖ Contrastive pictures are presented throughout the poem which helps to highlight the difference between the old glory of the river as compared to the present degraded state.
- ❖ River, which is considered as a symbol of life, is now contaminated just like human life. **"River, Once"** by Parthasarathy is a poem that was inspired by **A.K.Ramanujan's** poem **"A River"**, as Parthasarathy himself admits. Both Parthasarathy and Ramanujan use literature as a means to shed light on ecological imbalances in the world.
- ❖ Parthasarathy seeks changes in human attitude towards nature, he wants them to realize the inter-dependable relation humans have with nature.

## **SAROJINI NAIDU : INDIAN WEAVERS**

### **Early Life and Education**

-  Naidu was born in Hyderabad on the 13th of February 1879 to eminent linguist Aghornath Chattopadhyay and his wife Barada Sundari Devi, a Bengali poetess. Her father was also one of the first members of the Indian National Congress in Hyderabad.
-  Sarojini Naidu was an intelligent student who showed fluency in Urdu, Telugu, English, Bengali, and Persian.
-  At the age of 12, she received fame by topping the matriculation exams of Madras University. This leads her to receive a scholarship from the Nizam of Hyderabad to study abroad.
-  Naidu was interested in writing poetry, while her father wanted her to be a mathematician.
-  Sarojini went to study in England where she met famous literary laureates such as Edmond Gosse and Arthur Symonds. Gosse suggested that Naidu should use Indian themes in her poetry work.
-  Naidu expressed the life and events of modern India through her poetry. Her works- 'The Golden Threshold' (1905), **'The Bird of Time' (1912), and 'The Broken Wing' (1917)** found readership in both India and England.



-  Sarojini Naidu had an intercaste marriage with Dr. Muthyala Govindarajulu Naidu, a South Indian doctor under the Brahmo Marriage Act (1872).
-  Contribution in the Indian Independence Struggle
-  Naidu became part of the independence movement by showcasing her oratory skills. She advocated for women's rights and their empowerment.
-  As the partition of Bengal began in 1905, she connected with eminent leaders of the Indian National Congress.
-  Between 1915-1918, she excelled in delivering her oratory skills about the social welfare of women. She encouraged women to step out of their homes and fight for the independence of the country.
-  In 1917, Naidu accompanied Annie Beasant, the president of the Home Rule to advocate for women's suffrage in front of the Joint Select Committee in London. She also showed support for the Lucknow Pact, a joint Hindu-Muslim demand for British better political reform.
-  The same year, Naidu joined Gandhi's satyagraha and non-violent movement.
-  In 1919, Naidu also joined the non-cooperation movement as a part of her advocacy against British rule.
-  Naidu also became the first Indian female president of the Indian National Congress in 1925.
-  She was also responsible for persuading Gandhi to let women join the Salt March in 1930.
-  In 1931, Sarojini Naidu joined the Round Table Conference in London under the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. She was, however, jailed in 1932.
-  For her involvement in the Quit India Movement, Naidu faced imprisonment in 1941.
-  After India's independence in 1947, Naidu became the first governor of Uttar Pradesh. She retained office till her death in 1949.
-  Sarojini Naidu has been memorialized at the University of Hyderabad's Golden Threshold.
-  In 1990, the Asteroid 5647 Sarojini Naidu, discovered by Eleanor Helin at Palomar Observatory and was named in her memory.
-  Sarojini Naidu has been one of the most prominent female literary laureates and freedom fighters who encouraged women to participate in politics in India.

### **SAROJINI NAIDU:**







- ✂ Sarojini Naidu, the nightingale of India, occupies a unique place in Indo-Anglian poetry. Her early poetry is mostly imitative of English poets-Shelley, Keats and the preRaphaelites. It was artificial and stilted.
- ✂ Her poems seal the aroma of the Indian atmosphere. She has given poetic and picturesque expression to the India of temples, wandering pilgrims and singers, palanquin bearers, grinders and weavers. Sarojini Naidu is a lyric poet par excellence in Indo-Anglian poetry.
- ✂ Due to her flawless poetic art, three of her poems **“The Soul’s Prayer”, “To a Buddha Seated on a Lotus” and “In Salutation to External Peace.” Have been included in THE OXFORD BOOK OF ENGLISH MYSTICAL VERSE.**
- ✂ The poem (Indian Weaver’s) by Sarojini Naidu covers the enter life span of a human being. She brings out the joy and sorrow of creation though the symbol of weaving.
- ✂ She was fond of exotic and romantic life which bordered sentimentality. The poem covers the entire life-span of a human being.
- ✂ The joy and sorrow of creation is brought forth effectively through the symbol of weaving. In the poem she creator different time, moods and column.
- ✂ The poem is in the form of question – answer patterns.
- ✂ The first to lines form the question asked to the weavers and the next two lines forms the answer by the weaver. According to the Greek mythology.
- ✂ There are the facts, sisters- clothes, lachers and Atropos.
- ✂ The work of fat sister’s are the spin the thread, measures, the thread and cut (ship) the thread. Here it indicates the birth, life and death. Some critics associate the poem with the Indian Gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.
- ✂ Brahma, like the creator on lotus, which emerges in blue water. Here Sarojini Naidu apathy compares it with the holy con bird refers to the break of the day and the birth of the new child. Vishnu, the sustainer, the gives of wealth and splendor.

- ✖ In this 2nd stage her apathy refers to the colourful plumes of the peacock while describing the marriage veil of a queen, Shiva who symbolizes the end of life's journey. The weavers weaving a dead man's funeral shroud in the cold moonlight connected with Shiva are symbolically allocated with the end of life.

### **More About Sarojini Naidu**




- ✖ **Sarojini Naidu** was a **child prodigy, freedom fighter, and poet**, who is known as the Nightingale of India (**Bharatiya Kokila**).
- ✖ She was the first Indian woman to become the President of the Indian National Congress and the first woman Governor of Uttar Pradesh, India's fourth-largest state.
- ✖ As such, although her name is not as well recognised as that of the female Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, she led the way for women in Indian politics.
- ✖ After the arrests of **Gandhi, Abbas Tyabji, and Kasturba Gandhi**, she was instrumental in the Indian Independence Movement, joining Mahatma Gandhi in the Salt March to Dandi and then leading the **Dharasana Satyagraha**.
- ✖ She was a wife and a mother as well. In India, **Women's Day is celebrated on her birthday**.
- ✖ She met Dr. Muthyala Govindarajulu Naidu at the **age of 17**, while still in England, and fell in love with him. He belonged to Andhra Pradesh. A very happy one was her marriage. They were married in 1898 in Madras. Jayasurya, Padmaja, Randheer, and Leelamani had four children.
- ✖ Even though Govindarajulu was a non-Brahman, the marriage was blessed by her kin (rare at this time).
- ✖ A noted Indian activist, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, was Naidu's brother. Virendranath was instrumental in forming the Berlin Committee during World War I and was one of the leading figures of the Hindu German Scheme, a conspiracy to spur an anti-British, pro-German rebellion in India. He later became committed to Communism, moving to Soviet Russia where, on Joseph Stalin's orders in 1937, he is believed to have been executed. Harindranath, another brother, was an actor.

### **Sarojini Naidu Freedom Fighter**




-  In the aftermath of the 1905 partition of Bengal, she joined the Indian independence movement. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Rabindranath Tagore, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Annie Besant, C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, Mohandas Gandhi, and Jawaharlal Nehru were in touch with Sarojini between 1903-17. She lectured on youth welfare, labour dignity, women's emancipation, and nationalism in India from 1915 to 1918.
-  To advocate for the female franchise, she helped create the *Women's Indian Association (WIA)* (1917). **On December 15**, that year, she led a women's delegation to meet with the British Secretary of State for India, who was visiting India, asking for women's rights and a vote. Women were waking up to their civic obligations, the delegation told the Minister.
-  At the special session of the Indian National Congress that met in Bombay in August 1918, she spoke about women's rights. She accompanied Annie Besant, President of the WIA, in May 1918 to present the case for the women's vote to the Joint Select Committee in London debating Indian constitutional reforms, where they told the MPs that "powerful, unified and ready to change society" were Indian women.
-  After meeting **Jawaharlal Nehru in 1916**, she took up the cause of the Chappel Head Indigo workers as well. The British government passed the Rowlatt Act in March 1919, in which the possession of seditious papers was considered illegal. To protest, Mohandas Gandhi initiated the Non-Cooperation Movement and Naidu was the first to join the movement the government was trying to suppress.
-  In July 1919, Naidu became the ambassador of the Home Rule League to England, where the Government of India Act (1919) was passed, which constituted a legislative assembly, but with a limited number of 93 elected delegates (with 42 appointed and an upper house of 34 elected and 26 appointed members).
-  It did not give a vote to women. She returned to India in July 1920, and Mahatma Gandhi announced the Non-Cooperation Movement on August 1. In January 1924, at the East African Indian Congress, she was one of the two delegates to the Indian National Congress. As a supporter of the needs of the dispersed Indian populations, she travelled across East and South Africa.

### **Sarojini Naidu as President of Congress**




-  In 1925, eight years after Anie Bessant was elected, Sarojini Naidu was elected as the first Indian woman to serve as the President of the Indian National Congress. This place was a strong one. It is unlikely that at this point, apart from Regnant Queens, any other woman has achieved such a significant political role.
-  To support the cause of India's independence, Naidu visited New York in October 1928. She also shared concerns about the unequal treatment of African-Americans and Amerindians while there. She became a member of the Congress Working Committee upon her return to India. The National Congress declared its independence from the British Empire on January 26, 1930.
-  Mohandas Gandhi was apprehended on May 5. Shortly thereafter, Naidu was arrested and was in custody for several months. She was released on **January 31, 1931, along with Gandhi**. They were arrested again later that year. Owing to her ill health, Naidu was finally released and Gandhi was released in 1933. In 1931, along with Gandhi and Pandit Malaviyaji, she participated in the Round Table Summit in London. In 1942, she was arrested and remained with **Gandhiji in jail for 21 months during the "Quit India" movement.**





### **Sarojini Naidu Works:**

-  In 1905, The Golden Threshold was published as the first volume of her book of poems. There were two additional volumes published: **The Bird of Time (1912) and The Broken Wing (1917)**, which also included 'The Gift of India'.
-  In 1919, she published the autobiography of Muhammad Jinnah, and in 1943, **The Sceptred Flute: Songs of India** along with Allahabad: **Kitabistan** was posthumously published.
-  In 1961, she published 'The Feather of the Dawn' which was edited by her daughter Padmaja Naidu. 'The Indian Weavers' was published in 1971. Her poetry had beautiful words which could be sung as well which led to her being called the nightingale of India.

### **Sarojini Naidu Awards and Honors:**

-  The British government awarded Naidu the Kaisar-i-Hind Medal for her work during the plague epidemic in India, which she later returned to protest over the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh in April 1919.



-  The Birthday of Naidu, i.e. 13 February, is celebrated as Women's Day to remember the strong voices of women in the history of India.
-  Directed by Bhagwan Das Garga and produced by the Films Division of the Government of India, Sarojini Naidu (1960) is a documentary film about her life.
-  Sarojini Naidu was granted the title of "**Nightingale of India**" for her work in the field of poetry writing.
-  With a Google Doodle, Google India commemorated Naidu's 135th birth anniversary in 2014. Sarojini Naidu was among the "**150 Leading Figures**".




WEAVERS, weaving at break of day,  
Why do you weave a garment so gay? . . .  
Blue as the wing of a halcyon wild,  
We weave the robes of a new-born child.

Weavers, weaving at fall of night,  
Why do you weave a garment so bright? . . .  
Like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green,  
We weave the marriage-veils of a queen.

Weavers, weaving solemn and still,  
What do you weave in the moonlight chill? . . .  
White as a feather and white as a cloud,  
We weave a dead man's funeral shroud.

**Sarojini Naidu**

### **Stanza 1: Young Age**

-  **In the first stanza**, the poet asks the weavers why they are weaving clothes early in the morning which seem to be quite beautiful and charming (gay). The clothes are blue as the wing of a halcyon wild. Halcyon is the other name of the kingfisher.
-  The wings of the kingfisher are bright blue in colour. In addition blue colour also symbolises loyalty. The blue colour thus symbolises something beautiful and precious. Hence, **in this stanza**, the clothes weaved by the weavers are quite special and this is why the poet is curious to know about them.
-  The Indian Weavers reply, We weave the robes of a new-born child i.e. they are weaving the beautiful dress for a young one who has just came to the world.

- In this stanza, a number of images are used to describe the first stage of human life like break of day, garments so gay, & blue as the wing of halcyon wild. This stage is full of happiness, freshness, hope, beauty etc. There is no sorrow in the stage.


## **Stanza 2: Adulthood**

- In the second stanza, the poet again meets the Indian Weavers, this time during the fall of night. It probably refers to the evening or dusk time when the sun sets and darkness paves the way. Moreover, it is also the time during which most of the Indian marriages take place.
- The poet questions the weavers why they weave a garment so bright like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green. The garment at this time is bright and full of colours like feathers of peacock unlike the one colour-blue (during the morning time).
- The weavers reply that they weave the marriage-veils of a queen, thus referring to the second or in other words adult stage of the life. During this stage, humans are quite active. They love each other, get married and quest for a better and prosperous life.
- The colours purple and green symbolise sorrow and happiness or struggle and ease in one's adult stage and these all colours or ups and downs of life make the adulthood bright.

## **Stanza 3: Death**

- In the third stanza, the poet finds the weavers solemn and still i.e. they are quite sorrowful, grieved and silent. They are weaving something weird in the moonlight chill i.e. in the dead of the night which is White as a feather and white as a cloud, i.e. colourless, lifeless.
- As the poet fails to figure out what it is (the cloth) and why they are sorrowful and silent, she asks them what are they weaving rather than why are they weaving. They reply that they are weaving shroud (cloth put on the dead body) for a dead person.
- Thus the 3rd and the final stage is death which is emotionless and lifeless like a white cloud or feather. In this way, the life which begins with life, joy, hope etc ends with sorrow and grief.

## **GLOSSARY:**

 **HALYCON:** Kingfisher—also a mythological bird thought to breed in a nest floating in the sea, during the winter solstice, charming the wind and waves into calm.

 **ANNOTATE:**

- Blue as the wing of a halcyon wild, We weave the robes of a new-born child.
- Like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green, We weave the marriage-veils of a queen.
- White as a feather and white as a cloud, We weave a dead man's funeral shroud.

## **KAMALA DAS : INTRODUCTION MY GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE**

### **KAMALA DAS**

- ❖ Kamala Suraiya (born Kamala Das on March 31, 1934), is a well-known Indian writer who writes in English as well as Malayalam, her native language.
- ❖ She is considered to be one of the outstanding Indian poets writing in English, although her popularity in Kerala is based chiefly on her short stories and autobiography.
- ❖ Much of her writing in Malayalam came under the pen name Madhavikkutty.
- ❖ She was born in Malabar in Kerala, India. For Das, poetry (or love?) is “The April sun squeezed like an orange juice”, the heat permeates into the reader's mind. When she is moving to a new city, “Sadness becomes a silent stone in the river's unmoving core”.
- ❖ She bid farewell to “the shadows behind the windowpane, the rain, the yellow moon, the crowd and the sea”.
- ❖ This sensitivity is the strength of her poetry.
- ❖ Her mother, Balamani Amma was a popular writer who published over 20 anthologies of poetry. Kamala Das was described in “The Times” as the “mother of modern Indian English Poetry”.
- ❖ Her style of writing is often compared with that of Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton.
- ❖ She went on to win the Kendra Sahitya Academy Award in 1985. She passed away in the year 2009 after a severe bout of pneumonia.

- ❖ One of the characteristic features of Kamala Das, as seen in many of her poems, is the casual, cynical view of male-female relationship.
- ❖ The female characters in Das' poems have to face a male dominated world of sex, lust and lechery. There are strong notes of subjectivism in her poetry.
- ❖ Her poems are mainly concerned with herself as a victim of the circumstances of her life and sexual humiliations.
- ❖ Being subjective and confessional, her poems lets us peep into her sufferings and tortured psyche on one hand and the complexity of female sensibility.
- ❖ The speaking voice in the genre of poetry of Kamala Das is unmistakably the poet herself.
- ❖ Das' poetry conjures up a world of unfulfilled love: a world in which the woman is frustrated at her partner's stagnation.
- ❖ E.V. Ramakrishnan states that confessional poetry is a struggle to relate the personal, private experience with the outer world as it is.
- ❖ Such a struggle is evident in the poetry of Kamala Das.
- ❖ In several of her poems, she makes a candid and bold revelation of her sexual urge, unfulfilled longings and inner yearnings.
- ❖ By her bold confessions, iconoclastic attitudes and tongue in cheek attacks on social conventions and taboos, Das emerges as the emancipated Indian woman who comes to terms with her modern existence in the background of her Hindu ethos. Kamala Das is also called 'poet of the body' for she is the first Indian woman to speak frankly about sex.







### **THE STONE GODDESS - Kamala Das**

In a town of gods, housed in a little shrine,  
From sculptured limbs the Godhead looked at me,  
A living Presence deathless and divine,



A Form that harboured all infinity.  
The great World-Mother and her mighty will  
Inhabited the earth's abysmal sleep,  
Voiceless, omnipotent, inscrutable,  
Mute in the desert and the sky and deep.  
Now veiled with mind she dwells and speaks no word,  
Voiceless, inscrutable, omniscient,  
Hiding until our soul has seen, has heard  
The secret of her strange embodiment,  
One in the worshipper and the immobile shape,  
A beauty and mystery flesh or stone can drape.

### **THE STONE GODDESS:**

-  The image of Durga Matha is seen in Calcutta during pooja season.
-  The image in a small shrine which ultimately represents the one death has been existing from the beginning of creation and therefore defies the concept of the 'origin' skilled, sculptors and great artisans had touch this infinite, divine spirit and harbored it in the stone.
-  **In stanza 2** the poet once again asserts the fact that his divine spirit is the mother of the world. The world exist because of this infinite spirit which is threw from time immemorial and whose divine will has brought about the existence of the world.
-  The mother's mighty will is the silent, mysterious, all powerful force seen in the desert, the wind and the ocean.
-  **In stanza 3**, the poet returns to the farm that the divine spirit has now acquired the stone goddess is the idol or Perfect.
-  It has been made by man who has visualized his thought of divine into a form. Her power which is visible is the elemental forces lie dormant in the stone.



- Thus he remains voiceless, inscrutable and omniscient in the form given to her by man, functioning as the mother to whom man looks up to for comparison and cancellation.
- Her apparent silence baffles man. The poet concludes by saying that only one who leaves in harmony with the elements and with one own self will be able to hear and withstand the secret of her strange embodiment.
- One can know her only if one listens to one's own soul because the divinity which his every is within one self also. Only an enlightened seeker will understand that the distinction between the worshipper and immortality shape is outward, one is made of flesh and the other a stone, beyond this lies and mystery mainly the oneness of the pivarma ( The individual soul) and paramatma ( the divine soul).
- Thus this sonnet which is the quintessence of vedantic philosophy illustration Sri Aurobindo's belief in the ascent of man and descent of divine through ennobling of the self is order to attain God head.
- For Sri Aurobindo, poetry was a mode of meditation or 'ohyanamatra' and he used the English language effectively to accommodate his mystic.

## **GLOSSARY:**

1. Abysmal: bottomless
2. omnipotent: all-powerful
3. inscrutable: difficult to decipher
4. omniscient: all-knowing

## **ANNOTATE:**

- A living Presence deathless and divine, A form that harboured all infinity.
- Mute, in the desert and the sky and deep.
- One in the worshipper and the immobile shape, A beauty and mystery flesh or stone can drape.

## **RACK YOUR BRAINS:**

1. Explain "hiding until our has seen" in the context of the poem.

2. Bring out the poet's suggestion that the mystery and beauty lies in the eyes of the onlooker also.
3. Write a paragraph on your own experience of viewing a deity or a sculpted image.

### **“THE OLD PLAYHOUSE” (Text of the Poem)**

You planned to tame a swallow,  
to hold her I  
n the long summer  
of your love so that  
she would forget  
Not the raw seasons alone,  
and the homes left behind,  
but Also her nature, the urge to fly,  
and the endless Pathways of the sky.  
It was not to gather knowledge  
Of yet another man that  
I came to you but to learn  
What I was, and by learning,  
to learn to grow, but every  
Lesson you gave was about yourself.  
You were pleased  
With my body's response,

Its weather, its usual shallow Convulsions. You dribbled spittle into my mouth, you poured Yourself into every nook and cranny, you embalmed My poor lust with your bitter-sweet juices. You called me wife, I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and To offer at the right moment the vitamins. Cowering Beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic loaf and Became a dwarf. I lost my will and reason, to all your Questions I mumbled incoherent replies.

The summer Begins to pall. I remember the rudder breezes Of the fall and the smoke from the burning leaves. Your room is Always lit by artificial lights, your windows always Shut. Even the air-conditioner helps so little, All pervasive is the male scent of your breath. The cut flowers In the vases have begun to smell of human sweat. There is No more singing, no more dance, my mind is an old Playhouse with all its lights put out. The strong man's technique is Always the same, he serves his love in lethal doses, For, love is Narcissus

at the water's edge, haunted By its own lonely face, and yet it must seek at last An end, a pure, total freedom,  
 it must will the mirrors To shatter and the kind night to erase the water.

## EXPLANATION

- ❖ This poem belongs to the collection “**The Old Playhouse and Other Poems**”, 1973. The poem begins by the poetess comparing herself to a domesticated swallow, who is captured by her husband. He attempts to tame her just as one would tame a pet.
- ❖ The poetess feels like a caged bird whose dreams and freedom are curtailed by her husband. He also tries to make her forget how her life was before her marriage. The freedom, the comforts and the distinct identity she once enjoyed is no more now. She is made to forget all other seasons or in other words, she is made to forget all joys in her life.
- ❖ The speaker says that she married to discover herself and to undertake a journey of self-discovery. But then all her hopes, dreams and romantic notions of marriage are shattered as all that her husband teaches her is about himself. She feels degraded as she is treated as a mere object for sexual gratification. Her husband is so self-centered that he fails to realize that her soul is not present in the process of love-making.
- ❖ He was pleased merely by the physical sight and response from his wife’s body and cared not for her emotional contentment. The speaker describes their love making act with disgust as a merely mechanical act without soul. Her husband only explored her body out of lust and never even attempted to explore her soul or mind.
- ❖ While making love, the speaker says that every part of the body is penetrated except the soul. Hence, she hardly ever experiences feelings of oneness with him. She is left emotionally unsatisfied and disappointed. Being a wife, she was expected to serve him food and vitamins (or medicines) at the right time. She lived forever under his monstrous ego.
- ❖ She felt totally subjugated and this in turn made her feel like she has turned or degraded into a dwarf. She lost all her dreams, desires, even her identity and with this, all her former stature as well. This stifling life leaves her mentally perturbed, hence, her responses and reactions often sound illogical and incoherent. She is completely dehumanized in this caged experience.
- ❖ The “**summer**”, the “rudder breezes” and the “**burning leaves**” highlights the suffocation felt by the speaker. Her husband turns into a source of pervasive oppression.
- ❖ A lot of urban imagery (artificial lights, cut flowers, air-conditioner, shut windows etc.) is used to describe the unnatural state of her lifeless married life and the fake love in it.
- ❖ The cut flowers losing their natural scent may be a symbol of all the joys of the speaker's life that have now faded. Her husband has reduced love to mere lust and his fake love is almost deadly in nature. His love in fatal doses almost kills her. According to Greek legend, Narcissus is a Greek youth who is

obsessively in love with his own image which is reflected in the water of a fountain. He doesn't realize it is himself and he thinks it's the nymph of the place.

- ❖ Thus, he tries to approach it and kills himself in the process. Narcissism also refers to sexual gratification found in one's own body or a vain admiration of one's idealized self-image.
- ❖ Basically, what the poet is trying to convey here is that excessive and obsessive self-love is self-destructive in nature. Hence, her husband's self-centered, fake love would surely lead to a destructive end. It would not only kill her husband but also herself. She yearns for a release from the tyranny of her husband, even if this meant suicide.

## **SHORT ANALYSIS**

- **"The Old Playhouse"** by Kamala Das is in short, a description of an unsatisfactory and disappointing married life.
- It is more like a public protest against the poetess' husband.
- Let us consider the title of the poem.
- A 'playhouse' is literally a miniature version of a house for children to play in, usually girls.
- Girls use playhouses for pretend play as they are trained by society to believe they are all naturally home makers who tend to homes and care for children while boys play around with toy cars, guns or balls.
- The playhouse is thus responsible for reinforcing stereotypical notions on gender and propagating male dominance. Thus, the playhouse could be taken as a symbol for a traditional patriarchal society.
- The persona in the poem is a woman who is caged like a swallow even though she has an inborn "urge to fly".
- The monotony of domestic life is hinted at in words like "tea", "vitamins" and "flowers in the vases".
- Love, which is usually considered as the spirit of life is represented in this poem as the killer of life.



- The poem sheds light on the fact that physical gratification alone fails to provide contentment or fulfillment in married life. In fact, self-identity is lost through this act of spiritless love making.

## **NISSIM EZEKIEL : ENTERPRISE NIGHT OF THE SCORPION**

### **NISSIM EZEKIEL**

- Nissim Ezekiel was an Indian born poet coming from a Jewish family.
- He is described as the “father of post-independence Indian verse in English”.
- He worked as an English teacher in both India and abroad.
- He also worked as a broadcaster on Indian radio, a critic and a playwright.
- A distinguished figure in the cultural, literary and the intellectual circle of India, Ezekiel has contributed a creative, straight forward point to point and more direct approach to the Indo Anglian poetry.
- Just like most of the new Indian poets in English, Ezekiel’s poems are self-revelatory, self-confessional and at other times plainly autobiographical. Ezekiel’s poetry is both the instrument and the outcome of his attempt as a man to come to terms with himself.
- The writing of Ezekiel is one quick movement across the various psychological stages of man, not necessarily autobiographical.
- It is the biography of each and every thinking individual.
- His later poems however are full of self- analysis and introspection as they are still in search of a ‘finished man’.
- Some of his popular poems are “Night of the Scorpion”, “Background, Casually” and “The Visitor”. “Night of the Scorpion” is a poem that contrasts scientific temperament with superstitions.
- It is believed that Ezekiel has composed the very best of his poetry out of the ordinariness of human life as is evident in “In the Country Cottage”.
- He shows the world that poetry doesn’t necessarily have to deal with great philosophical truths in order to be impressive and revealing, in fact, ordinary situations are more than enough.

### **“IN THE COUNTRY COTTAGE”**

(Text of the Poem)



The night the lizard came  
our indolence was great;  
we went to bed before  
our eyes were heavy,  
limbs prepared to stretch or love.  
Immobile, tense and grey,  
he taught us patience as  
he waited for the dark.  
From time to time  
we could not help but glance  
at him and learn again that  
he was more alive than us in silent energy,  
though his aim was only the death of cockroaches.  
When we awoke the next morning  
we found as we expected that the job was done,  
clean and complete,  
and the stout lizard gone.

### **EXPLANATION AND ANALYSIS**

- The speaker talks of a particular night when a lizard came out at night. On seeing the lizard, the members of the country cottage seem to become lazy (indolence means idleness or laziness) and drop their guards.
- They decide to go to bed early even though they weren't really sleepy, either to stretch their limbs and relax or to make love. The lizard lay without any movement, stiff and grey in colour as if to hide its presence. This lizard was obviously waiting for its prey.
- To the speaker, the lizard seemed to teach a lesson of patience through its act of waiting motionlessly for hours in hope of catching its prey. The lizard was more alive and full of concentration in this act of waiting in silence than humans could be in silent energy. All this energy from the lizard's side was merely for the act of killing a cockroach.
- The next morning when all the members of the house awoke, they found that the lizard had done its job well and left the place. The lizard is described as a sturdy or stout lizard who did a 'clean and complete' job without leaving anything behind.

- Through this poem, **Nissim Ezekiel** draws a comparison between human beings and lowly creatures such as the lizard. The lizard is used as a symbol to highlight the importance of cleanliness, perseverance and dutifulness.
- The lizard shows so much concentration and energy for achieving such a small task as killing a cockroach unlike human beings who don't bother to show the same energy or hard-working mentality for achieving bigger or more important aims in their lives. Instead humans are indolent and fail to complete tasks as completely and neatly like the lizard does.
- The lizard, unlike man, also had a strong sense of responsibility and dutifulness which is why it cleans out all traces of the cockroach after killing it as wanted by the members of the cottage, hence described as a 'clean' job. The words 'immobile', 'tense' and 'grey' are used literally to describe the stout lizard. But it could also connote the state of being indolent human beings.

**TO BE CONTINUED.....**

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